

South Precinct Email Community Newsletter
November 24, 2009



Dear Community Friends:

Recently, we have seen a spree of car prowls in certain areas of the South Precinct. It is not uncommon for numerous cars at one location to be hit in the same short time frame. We've seen this happen at community centers, shopping centers and gathering hall parking lots. As we approach the holiday shopping season, we can anticipate we'll see more of multiple vehicle car prowls at one location. And as we are moving into the holiday season, we want to once again offer these car prowling prevention and personal safety tips.

Car Prowl Prevention

- When you exit or enter your parked vehicle, take a moment to look around the area.
- Turn off and lock your car whenever you have to walk away from it. This includes at gas pumps, ATM machines, etc. Never leave your car idling.
- Before leaving your parked car, always remove the keys, roll up the windows and lock the car.
- **Leave No Valuables in Your Car.** Never leave valuables in your car. Items of little or no value to you still look inviting to a thief. Even pocket change is enough of an enticement for some thieves.
- If you must leave valuables in your car (say you're out shopping and still have some stops to make), make sure that nothing of value is within plain view. Place items in your car trunk out of sight. Do this when you get to your car, rather than waiting until you park at your next stop. Often, people will arrive at their destination and then put items in the trunk. They've just shown anyone who may be around that they just put valuables in the trunk and then walked away from their vehicles. So, if you are going to put something in your trunk, place it in before you get to your destination so you don't show everyone that you've just put valuables in your trunk.
- Don't leave accessories visible in your car. You may have taken the Laptop or iPod in with you, but if you leave the USB cables for your laptop or earbuds for the iPod in the back seat, the offender may think those items are in the car and break in anyway.
- GPS systems are being taken at an alarming rate. Think about how the GPS is mounted in your car. If the mounting for the GPS is visible, the thief may think the GPS is in the glove box or under the seat and may break in to try to get it. Have removable mounting for the GPS and put that out of sight as well.
- If possible, store your car in a closed and locked garage. Make a habit of locking your garage door and car doors.
- If your car is stored in a carport or parked near your house, leave your exterior lights on throughout the night.
- If you park on the street, choose a well-lit, open space even if it means adding additional street/yard lighting & trimming back trees/bushes that block your view of your vehicle.
- If you park in a paid lot, use lots that have attendants.
- Consider replacing the light fixture closest to your car with a motion detector unit. Motion detectors are a good psychological deterrents since the normal assumption of a person seeing a light come on is that someone has seen them. Additionally, the light makes the prowler or thief more visible.
- You may want to consider an alarm system for the car. An alarm will not prevent anyone from gaining entry or damaging the car, but the noise of the alarm will draw attention to the car and therefore to the thief. Additionally, many alarm systems have a blinking red light mounted on the dash. That visible indicator may be a deterrent to would be thieves.

Personal Safety While Holiday Shopping

- Take a friend along when doing holiday shopping. Using the buddy system reduces your chances of being a victim of robbery.
- When paying by cash, only take out the amount needed and keep the remainder out of view. It's always a good idea to carry minimal amounts of cash, regardless of the time of year.
- Always maintain positive Control over your items. Don't tempt a thief by leaving your purse, wallet or packages unattended. It only takes a second to grab them.
- Beware of strangers who bump, shove or get too close. Pickpockets may use these diversions to lift your wallet.
- Be cautious of those you don't know who offer to carry bags and packages for you. Depending on where you shop, store personnel or mall security may offer assistance in carrying packages to your car or escorting you to your vehicle.
- If you have to return to your car to store purchases, place them in the trunk out of sight. Do this when you get to your car, rather than waiting until you park at your next stop. Gifts and other valuables should never be left in clear view.
- Before returning to your car, make sure you're not over-burdened with packages. Have your car keys in hand to avoid "searching" for them when you reach your car.

When Using an Automated Teller Machine....

- Only take out the amount you need, rather than the maximum you can get.
- Don't walk away from the cash machine counting your money. That's an invitation to someone who may not have the best of intentions in mind.
- Secure your money and your bankcard or credit card back in your wallet or pocket before leaving the ATM.
- Beware of strangers hanging around the ATM. Wait until they leave, or consider using an alternate cash machine. You should report suspicious people to bank personnel, mall security and/or police.
- Using the ATM inside a major grocery store might be a better alternative to using one on the street, especially during hours of darkness.
- Always keep your PIN number separate from your bank and/or credit card.

A Personal Note....

I had gone out of town for a couple of days and let a friend borrow my car. While he made a stop to get something to eat, he left his shoulder bag with laptop inside behind the driver's seat. Well, when he came out from having dinner, he found the passenger side window broken and the bag with his laptop gone. Naturally, my friend is angry that someone broke in to the car and stole his laptop. He's also feeling pretty bad because of the damage to my car. If the shoulder bag had not been left in the car, the car would not have been broken in to. While not thrilled about spending the \$200 to have the passenger side window replaced, I consider that minor compared to the loss of the laptop. I say that because of what was on the laptop; working papers, resume's, personal letters, pictures of his young daughters,.... Things that cannot be easily - if at all - replaced. So, given this most recent experience, I want to stress again the importance of being vigilant with your personal items and cautious about leaving items unattended in your car. You can replace "stuff"; but some things, like images from a child's birthday party, can't be recreated once they are gone. Keep that in mind when thinking about your items. Often times, it's not just the cost of the items that you need to consider; it's also the cost of repairing the damage and the loss of the intangible and the irreplaceable.

Until next time, Take Care and Stay Safe!

Captain David Emerick, South Precinct Commander Mark Solomon, Crime Prevention Coordinator